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July 17, 1997

Mr. William F. Caton Acting Secretary Federal Communications Commission 1919 M Street, N.W., Room 222 Washington, D.C. 20554 RECEIVED

JUL 17 1997

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

RE: CC Docket 96-45 Federal State Joint Board on Universal Service

Dear Mr. Caton;

Enclosed for filing on behalf of ALLTEL Telephone Services Corporation are one original and four (4) copies of its Petition for Reconsideration in connection with the above-referenced matter.

Please contact the undersigned counsel should you have any question.

Sincerely,

Carolyn C. Hill

Carry Huch

CCH/mdl

ENCLOSURES

cc: Sheryl Todd w/diskette

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Before The Federal Communications Commission Washington, D.C. 20554



In the Matter of

Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service

CC Docket No. 96-45

Petition for Reconsideration of ALLTEL Telephone Services Corporation

ALLTEL Telephone Services Corporation, on behalf of its affiliated local exchange companies (hereinafter "ALLTEL or the ALLTEL Companies"), respectfully submits its petition for reconsideration of the Commission's Report and Order released May 7, 1997, in the above-captioned matter.

ALLTEL's Interest

The ALLTEL Companies are "rural telephone" companies within the meaning of Section 153 (37) of the Communications Act. They are wholly owned subsidiaries of ALLTEL Corporation. The ALLTEL Companies are located in fourteen states and collectively have approximately 1.6 million access lines. The areas they serve are predominantly rural and/or high cost areas, and as a result, the ALLTEL Companies will be directly affected by the Commission's Report and Order.

ALLTEL's request for reconsideration relates to the Part 54 Rules the Commission has adopted with respect to Long Term Support (LTS) or its equivalent.

As discussed below, ALLTEL believes that with the de-linkage of LTS from interstate access charges and the incorporation of LTS into Part 54 of the Commission's

Rules, Universal Service Support for High Cost Areas, the Commission should not require membership in the NECA CCL pool as a condition precedent for eligible incumbent rural LECs to receive LTS or its equivalent.

I. MEMBERSHIP IN THE NECA CCL POOL SHOULD NOT BE A CRITERIA FOR RURAL LECs TO RECEIVE LTS.

In the Report and Order, the Commission held that the subsidy provided by LTS was an impermissible implicit subsidy that should not be funded through the interstate access charge system. Rather, consistent with the requirements of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the Commission found that LTS should be treated as an explicit subsidy and funded through the interstate universal service support mechanisms. R&O paras. 750-751. The Commission agreed with the Joint Board that "the existing LTS payment structure is inconsistent with the Act because contributions to universal service must be equitable and available to all eligible telecommunications carriers." Id. at para. 751. The Commission provided, in lieu of LTS through the access charge regime, "comparable payments, on a per-line basis, from the new federal universal service support mechanisms." Id. ALLTEL does not disagree with the Commission's determination that LTS must be de-linked from access charges and treated as an explicit subsidy funded by the universal service support mechanisms. However, ALLTEL does disagrees with how the Commission has chosen to implement this requirement. Specifically, ALLTEL disagrees with Section 54.303 of the Commission's Rules because it unfairly denies LTS or its equivalent to otherwise eligible incumbent LECs. Section 54.303 provides in pertinent part:

Beginning January 1, 1998, eligible telephone companies that participate in the NECA Carrier Common Line pool and competitive eligible local telecommunications carriers will receive Long Term Support. Long Term Support shall be the equivalent of the difference between the projected Carrier Common Line revenue requirement of association [NECA] Common Line tariff participants and the projected revenue recovered by the association [NECA] Common Line charge as calculated pursuant to Section 69.105 (b)(1).

ALLTEL believes that with the de-linkage of LTS from interstate access charges, membership in the NECA CCL pool is an arbitrary requirement and should not be a condition precedent to receipt of LTS. By providing LTS to rural LECs, such as the ALLTEL Companies, outside of the CCL pool, and through the universal service mechanisms, the Commission will enable rural LECs to realize the efficiencies inherent in de-pooling and to reflect those efficiencies in the interstate rates charged to their access customers.

Even under the current regime, NECA pool membership is not a requirement for any LEC to qualify for universal service fund support or DEM weighting. LECs have been able to qualify for these forms of support regardless of whether they were in or out of the pools. Moreover, ALLTEL believes that consistent with the requirements of the 96 Telecom Act, either a rural LEC qualifies for LTS or comparable payments through the universal service support mechanisms or it does not. Incumbent rural LECs should be free to remain in the NECA pool or to exit it; under either scenario, they should be permitted to receive LTS if they are eligible rural incumbent LECs. The ALLTEL Companies can and should be able to determine their LTS funding requirements regardless of their NECA pooling status. A depooled rural

LEC should be able to set its own CCL rates with its historic LTS offsetting its current CCL revenue requirement.

II. FOR THERE TO BE FAIR AND EQUITABLE TREATMENT, ALL RURAL LECS MUST HAVE THE ABILITY TO RECEIVE LTS OR COMPARABLE PAYMENTS

So long as LTS was allowed as an implicit subsidy and funded through the interstate CCL charges of incumbent LECs which had exited the NECA CCL pool, a nexus could be said to exist between the requirement of membership in the NECA CCL pool and the ability to receive LTS support. This is no longer true. Under the Report and Order. LTS or comparable support will be an explicit subsidy funded not just by former NECA CCL pool members, but by every telecommunications carrier that provides interstate telecommunications service. However, absent a change in the Commission's Part 54 Rules, not all incumbent rural LECs will be able to receive LTS or comparable payments. As earlier discussed, the Commission's Report and Order provides LTS or an LTS equivalent, effective January 1, 1998, for rural LECs in the NECA CCL pool. The Report and Order also provides universal service support, including an LTS equivalent, for non-rural incumbent LECs. Thus, on January 1, 1999, non-rural incumbent LECs can receive universal service support, including an LTS equivalent, based on proxy models. There is one group of incumbent rural LECs, though, that has been overlooked. That is those rural LECs already outside of the NECA CCL pool. In order for the Commission to maintain an equitable explicit subsidy structure, there should be rules in place which provide LTS or comparable support to otherwise, eligible rural LECs. Because the current Rules do not accomplish this, ALLTEL urges the Commission to amend them so as to provide that an eligible incumbent rural LEC that has left the NECA CCL pool can receive LTS support or comparable payments effective January 1, 1998, and such a rural incumbent LEC is not precluded from adopting proxies on a study area by study area basis effective January 1, 1999. ALLTEL believes that such a rule revision comports with the notion of basic fairness embodied in the 96 Act with respect to eligible providers being treated in an equitable manner.

II. SEICTION 54.303 SHOULD BE AMENDED TO COVER THE RECEIPT OF LTS OR ITS EQUIVALENT BY BOTH RURAL LECS IN THE CCL POOL AND THOSE OUTSIDE OF IT

ALLTEL urges the Commission to amend Section 54.303 so as to ensure fair and equitable treatment for all rural LECs and their subscribers. To accomplish this ALLTEL believes that Section 54.303 should be amended to read as follows:

§54.303 Long Term Support

(a) Beginning January 1, 1998, eligible telephone companies that participate in the NECA Carrier Common Line pool and competitive eligible local telecommunications carriers will receive Long Term Support. Each participant's Long Term Support shall be the equivalent of the difference between its prior year's projected Carrier Common Line revenue requirement and its prior year's projected revenue recovered by the association Carrier Common Line charge as calculated pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 69.105(b)(2). For calendar years 1998 and 1999, the Long Term Support for each eligible service area shall be adjusted each year to reflect the annual percentage change in the actual nationwide average loop cost as filed by the fund administrator in the previous calendar year, pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 36.622. Beginning January 1, 2000, the Long Term Support shall be adjusted each year to reflect the annual percentage change in the Department of Commerce's Gross Domestic Product-Chained Price Index (GDP-CPI).

- (b) Beginning January 1, 1998, eligible telephone companies who participated in the NECA Carrier Common Line pool the prior year may exit the pool and receive the Long Term Support calculated pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section.
- (c) Beginning January 1, 1998, eligible rural telephone companies who exited the Carrier Common Line pool prior to this date may receive Long Term Support based upon the number of qualifying lines they serve.
 - (1) Such Long Term Support shall be on a per line basis and shall be the equivalent of the difference between the prior year's projected Carrier Common Line revenue requirement of association Carrier Common Line tariff participants and the projected revenue recovered by the association Carrier Common Line charge as calculated pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 69.105(b)(2) of this chapter and divided by the number of association eligible lines. For calendar years 1998 and 1999, the Long Term Support, per line, for each eligible service area shall be adjusted each year to reflect the annual percentage change in the actual nationwide average loop cost as filed by the fund administrator in the previous calendar year, pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 36.622. Beginning January 1, 2000, the Long Term Support, per line, shall be adjusted each year to reflect the annual percentage change in the Department of Commerce's Gross Domestic Product-Chained Price Index (GDP-CPI).
- (d) Beginning January 1, 1999, eligible rural telephone companies who exited the Carrier Common Line pool prior to this date may utilize proxies on a study area by study area basis to determine their universal service support.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, ALLTEL respectfully submit that the Commission should grant the relief requested herein and amend Section 54.303 as proposed.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: Caroly C. Hill

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICES

I, Michele D. Leftwich, certify that a copy of the foregoing Petition for Reconsideration of ALLTEL Telephone Services Corporation was served this 17th day of July 1997, by U.S. first-class mail, postage prepaid, (unless otherwise noted) to the persons on the attached service list.

Michele D. Leftwich

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